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REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

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Improvements Needed
In Manpower Training At
The Boston Skills Center B-146879

Department of Labor
Department of Health, Education,
and Welfare

BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 21, 1972

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-146879

To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This is our report on improvements needed in manpower
training at the Boston Skills Center. This program is admin-
istered by the Department of Labor and the Department of
Health, Education, and Welfare. 22

Our review was made pursuant to the Budget and Account-
ing Act, 1921 (31 U.S.C. 53), and the Accounting and Auditing
Act of 1950 (31 U.S.C. 67).

Copies of this report are being sent to the Director,
Office of Management and Budget; the Secretary of Labor; and
the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare.

James B. Axtell

Comptroller General
of the United States

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ABBREVIATIONS

GAO	General Accounting Office
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
MDTA	Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, as amended

D I G E S T

WHY THE REVIEW WAS MADE

- 2 The Department of Labor provides institutional, or classroom, training in job skills to unemployed or underemployed persons needing such training to obtain and hold jobs. Through fiscal year 1971, Labor had obligated \$1.9 billion for contracts with public and private nonprofit organizations to conduct these training programs.
- 2 In 1968 Labor and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) established manpower-training skills centers in several States. The centers provide work orientation, basic and remedial education, institutional skill training in several occupations, and counseling and related services for trainees. In fiscal year 1971, 80 centers, enrolling 25 percent of all persons receiving institutional training, were in operation.
- 1 The General Accounting Office (GAO) reviewed the operations of the Boston Skills Center, East Boston, Massachusetts, as part of its series of evaluations of how well the centers were carrying out the institutional training programs.

Background

From 1964 to 1970 the Center provided training to about 4,900 persons, of whom 2,200 completed the program or left training to accept employment. (See p. 13.)

Over this 6-year period the Center spent \$2,906,000 for instructional and operating expenses and \$4,673,000 for trainees' allowances. (See p. 18.)

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Need for improved information system

The Center needs an improved management information system for assessing adequately the results of its programs and for determining areas needing improvement.

Better information was needed on the employment status of former trainees, their earnings in jobs after training, and the comparative costs for each trainee of the various courses offered at the Center. An evaluation of

19 other skills centers by a consultant firm noted similar shortcomings. (See p. 18.)

GAO proposed that Labor and HEW provide guidance to the State Division of Employment Security and to the Center for improving their information system. In December 1971 Labor stated that the State Division of Employment Security had implemented a revised system on a trial basis. (See p. 21.)

Inadequate vocational training openings

Most trainees need both prevocational and occupational training to qualify for jobs. Prevocational training, however, was not always sufficient to qualify persons for enrollment in the Center's occupational training programs.

Also there were not enough occupational training openings to accommodate many persons who had completed prevocational training. (See p. 23.)

GAO suggested several alternatives to correct these problems.

- Increase the number and type of occupational training courses to accommodate all eligible persons enrolled in prevocational training and needing skill training.
- Limit enrollment in prevocational courses to persons that can be expected to qualify for the occupational courses if additional courses cannot be provided.
- Eliminate prevocational training as a separate component and revise the occupational training curricula to include necessary basic education courses. (See p. 26.)

Labor, HEW, and Massachusetts State officials agreed to make certain changes in line with GAO's suggestions. As of January 1972, however, they reported that the imbalance between enrollment opportunities in the prevocational and the occupational training courses had not been fully resolved.

Enrollment of disadvantaged persons

Labor's goal for the institutional training program is that at least 65 percent of the enrollees in each State be from among the disadvantaged. The local employment service offices had not adequately determined whether applicants were disadvantaged. GAO tests showed that only 37 percent of the enrollees at the Center were disadvantaged. There was not sufficient information to show whether another 23 percent was disadvantaged. (See p. 29.)

Inadequate counseling

Trainees did not receive adequate counseling before they started their programs or during their training. Records frequently were not

maintained on counseling that had been provided. Subsequent to GAO's review the Center introduced a revised counseling procedure under which vocational education and employment service personnel cooperate in developing an employability plan for each trainee. (See p. 31.)

Inadequate monitoring

Many of the weaknesses which GAO noted could have been identified if the Federal and State agencies in charge of the training programs had monitored the Center's operation on a more appropriate and timely basis. Improved monitoring procedures instituted in fiscal year 1971 should provide the needed in-depth assessment of the Center's operations. (See p. 35.)

RECOMMENDATIONS OR SUGGESTIONS

Labor and HEW should review the adequacy of data provided through the revised management information system and assist in further improving reports on the Center's operations. (See p. 21.)

- 4 Labor should require the State Division of Employment Security to 576
 - ensure that determinations of applicants' disadvantaged status are made by local offices in accordance with prescribed criteria and
 - give greater emphasis to recruiting disadvantaged persons and referring them to the Center for training. (See p. 30.)

Labor and HEW should emphasize to the State Division of Employment Security and to the Center the need for adequate counseling and should monitor closely the implementation of the Center's revised counseling services. (See p. 34.)

AGENCY ACTIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES

In January 1972 regional officials of Labor and HEW considered terminating Federal funding of the Center. Although agreeing that many deficiencies in the Center's operations needed correction, headquarters' officials decided to continue the funding.

Both Departments agreed with GAO's recommendations. Labor referred to new guidelines transmitted to the field late in 1970, which were designed to overcome a number of the problems revealed by the GAO review, but recognized that the problems had not been fully resolved. Both Departments advised GAO of various steps which were being taken to improve the administration and operation of the Center.

HEW plans to have its regional offices review the coordination between prevocational and occupational training programs at other skills centers and assist those centers experiencing problems.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS

Information on the effectiveness and efficiency of skills centers' operations--a major institutional manpower training program--should assist the Congress in its deliberations on extending existing, and enacting new, manpower legislation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Boston Skills Center, located in East Boston, Massachusetts, is one of 80 skills centers established throughout the country to offer vocational training and related services to unemployed and underemployed persons, many of whom are classified as disadvantaged. The centers were established under authority provided by title II of the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, as amended (MDTA) (42 U.S.C. 2581). Under MDTA the Departments of Labor and of Health, Education, and Welfare are jointly responsible for administering and monitoring the operation of the skills centers. The Boston Skills Center is operated by the Boston Public Schools, in cooperation with the State Division of Employment Security and the State Department of Education.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

Our review was made to evaluate the program operations of the Boston Skills Center. We reviewed various aspects of program results for the period from the inception of the Center in September 1964 through August 1970 and of administrative procedures for the 2-year period ended August 31, 1970. We inquired into subsequent Center activities through January 1972, to determine whether certain needed improvements had been made, and into the consideration being given by the two Departments to terminating Federal funding of the Center.

Our review was made primarily at the Center and at the headquarters offices of Labor and HEW and at their regional offices in Boston. Also we discussed Center operations and administration with officials of the Boston Public Schools, the State Division of Employment Security, and the State Department of Education.

A previous report by us on skills center operations in Oakland, California, was transmitted to the Congress on February 10, 1971 (B-146879).

MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING ACT

MDTA provides that persons who lack the skills needed for available jobs be given the training and related education which will qualify them for work in occupations where shortages of trained workers exist. Title II of MDTA, pertaining to training and skill development programs, directs the Secretaries of Labor and HEW to develop and institute programs to select and train unemployed persons who cannot reasonably be expected to obtain full-time employment with their present skills and underemployed persons who are working but who, with training, could obtain higher level employment. Title II authorizes both on-the-job and institutional training programs to prepare workers for job opportunities.

The institutional training program provides vocational training in either a public or a private education institution, using a classroom method of teaching. The program provides basic education, communications, and employment skills to persons who will be able to pursue occupational training and to persons who have completed or do not need occupational training but require nonoccupational training to become employable.

Under MDTA, the Department of Labor is responsible for

- determining the occupations for which skilled individuals are needed;
- counseling, selecting, and referring applicants for institutional training;
- paying training allowances;
- assisting trained individuals in finding training-related employment; and
- making follow-up studies to determine whether the training programs meet the occupational needs of the individuals.

The U.S. Training and Employment Service of the Manpower Administration administers these activities through

agreements with State employment security agencies. Prior to March 1969 the Manpower Administration's Bureau of Employment Security administered these activities.

MDTA provides also that HEW enter into agreements with States to provide training programs--including curricula, instructors, and facilities--for the occupations for which trainees are selected by the Department of Labor. HEW's Office of Education (Bureau of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education) administers these training functions through agreements with State vocational education agencies.

DEVELOPMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL
TRAINING PROGRAM

Institutional training projects are developed and carried out by the local offices of the responsible State agencies, in coordination with their Federal counterparts in Labor and HEW. The local State employment security office determines the need for training, on the basis of comparisons of labor supply and demand, and proposes the establishment of institutional training courses to a committee composed of community representatives.

After the need for training is established, the State vocational education office designates the training facilities and, in cooperation with administrators of the training facilities, prepares course curricula and budgets for all costs except training allowances, which are determined by the State local employment security offices.

Manpower training skills centers--an important component of the institutional training program--are designed to provide trainees with individualized training programs. Skills centers were developed in response to the acute and widely varying needs of large numbers of trainees for special teaching methods and approaches and for a broad range of supportive services.

In August 1970 Labor and HEW issued instructions, entitled "Guidelines for the Planning and Development of Skills Centers," to be used jointly by State and local employment service and vocational education staffs for the planning, development, and administration of skills centers as well as by Labor and HEW regional offices for the review and monitoring of the centers' operations. The guidelines contain basic policies and criteria for the centers' administration and operation but do not provide the centers' management with procedures for implementing the policies and meeting the criteria.

The skills centers are self-contained facilities operating on a full-time basis during the day, generally under public school administration, to provide work orientation, basic and remedial education, institutional skill training in a variety of occupations, and counseling and related services for trainees recruited from a broad area.

In July 1968, Labor and HEW identified 55 establishments as meeting the established requirements and designated them as "Manpower Training Skills Centers." As of January 1972, 80 skills centers were operating, each of which offered training in a variety of occupations. Of the 80 centers 41 also conducted prevocational training courses independent of the occupational courses. The number of trainees enrolled in skills centers has increased each year and has accounted for a growing proportion of all institutional trainees. In fiscal year 1971 enrollments in skills centers accounted for about 38,700 persons, or 25 percent of the enrollees in institutional training courses funded under MDTA.

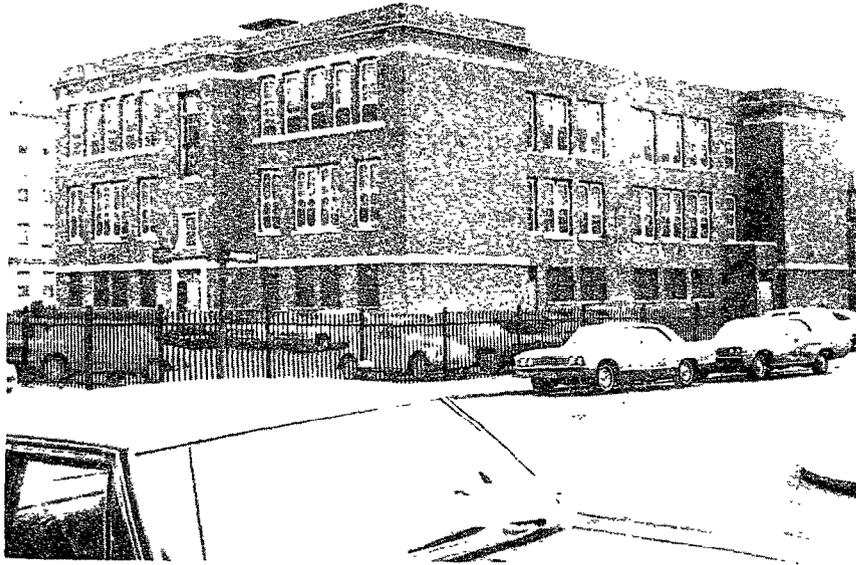
BOSTON SKILLS CENTER

In the spring of 1964, Federal, State, and local officials approved the establishment of a multiskills center in the city of Boston. The center began operations in September 1964 and was officially designated as a "Manpower Training Skills Center" by Labor and HEW in July 1968.

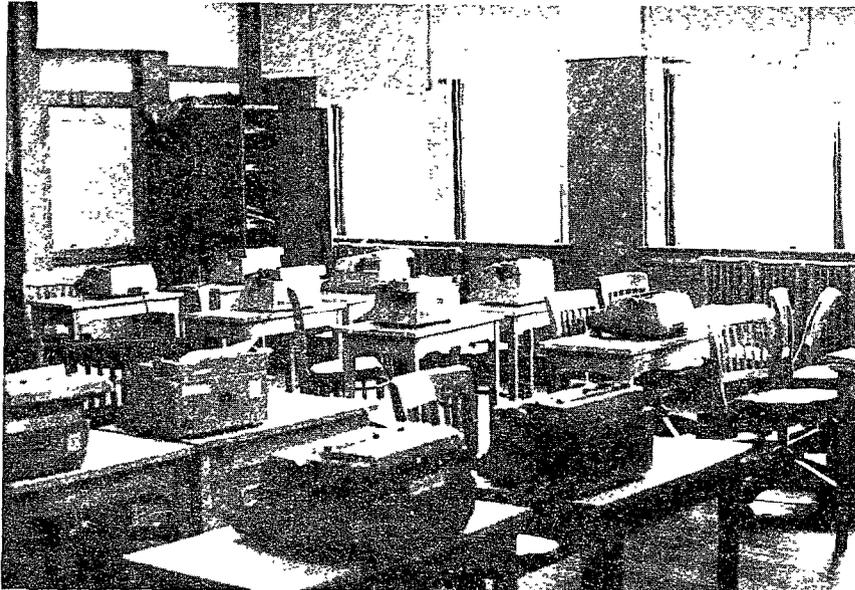
The Center is located in East Boston in a 48-year-old, three-story elementary school building (see p. 10), which was vacant for 3 years before the Center was established. The building contains the administrative offices of the Center, the offices of the State employment security office personnel assigned to the Center, and 18 classrooms. One of the classrooms is illustrated in the picture on page 10. Training is also conducted at satellite locations--the Boston Trade High School in Roxbury, and the East Boston High School and the Logan Auto Garage in East Boston. (See map on p. 11.)

The State Division of Employment Security is responsible for preparing the justifications for training courses at the Center and for selecting and referring applicants to training, paying training allowances, assisting trainees in finding employment, and performing necessary follow-up studies.

The 15 local employment security offices in the Boston metropolitan area and other offices in the State may accept applications for enrollment in Center training programs.



BOSTON SKILLS CENTER BUILDING



CLASSROOM FOR CLERK-TYPIST COURSE

LOCATION OF THE BOSTON SKILLS CENTER AND ITS SATELLITE OFFICES



The applications are sent to the local employment security office in either East Boston or downtown Boston. These offices share the responsibility for preparing enrollment forms, referring persons to the Center, and performing follow-up studies of the trainees after training. Prior to April 1970 four of the local employment security offices shared this responsibility.

The Division of Occupational Education of the State Department of Education is the vocational education agency in Massachusetts which, in coordination with the Boston Public Schools, is responsible for developing the training curricula used at the Center and for evaluating the training conducted at the Center.

The Boston Public Schools operate the Center and its satellite training sites. The Assistant Director, MDTA program, Department of Vocational Education and Industrial Arts, Boston public schools, has overall responsibility for the administration and operation of the Center. The day-to-day administration and operation of the Center's activities are handled by three supervisors: one for day classes, one for afternoon and evening classes, and one for satellite operations.

Trainees receive training allowances at a rate equal to the State's average unemployment insurance weekly benefit payment plus certain adjustments to give recognition to a trainee's dependents, length of enrollment, and, in certain instances, cost of transportation between his residence and the Center. The base allowance paid to trainees enrolled in MDTA institutional training courses in Massachusetts during the first quarter of 1972 was \$54 a week.

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CHAPTER 2

RESULTS OF TRAINING OPERATIONS

During the 6-year period from the Center's inception in September 1964 through August 1970, 4,927 persons were enrolled in training courses at the Center. The enrollees included 1,880 persons who received prevocational training, 2,683 who received occupational training, and 364 who received both prevocational and occupational training. During the 6-year period the Center incurred operating costs of \$2,906,000, including instructional services, utilities, equipment, and building rental, and paid \$4,673,000 for trainee allowances.

Managers of the Center and of the local employment security and vocational education offices had compiled data on funds expended, number of persons enrolled, number and types of training courses provided, and costs incurred for individual training courses but had not developed sufficient information on training results and costs to permit general conclusions concerning the Center's overall effectiveness. We are commenting on the need for an improved management information system later in this chapter.

TRAINING OPERATIONS

The Center offers two types of training, prevocational and occupational. Prevocational training is designed generally for persons who are not ready for employment or who may not be ready for occupational training because of insufficiencies in communication skills (language, reading, and writing), basic education, or work habits and attitudes. Occupational training is designed to provide enrollees with specific skills which will enable them to get jobs.

The State employment security offices throughout the Boston area refer prospective enrollees to the Center. Employment counselors at these offices select persons for training on the basis of interviews, aptitude tests, and prior work history. In general, persons referred to the Center fall into four categories.

1. Persons with relatively low educational levels who lack skills and the ability to communicate in English--these persons may receive training in three stages; instruction in English, instruction in basic education, and occupational training courses.

2. Persons having an occupational skill but lacking the ability to communicate in English--these persons receive instruction in English and then are referred to employment.

3. Persons needing skills and lacking the educational backgrounds to enroll in occupational training--these persons receive instruction in basic education and then may receive occupational training, if available.

4. Persons who have achieved adequate educational levels but who need skills to obtain employment--these persons are referred directly to occupational training.

Prevocational training

Prevocational training is offered on an open-entry and open-end basis; i.e., trainees may enter a course at various intervals throughout the year and leave when they achieve the level of education needed to transfer to occupational training or a job.

Center records show that 2,244 trainees enrolled in the prevocational training courses from September 1964 through August 1970. Their status as of August 1970 was as follows:

<u>Status</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Left the Center for employment	301	13.4
Transferred to occupational training at the Center	364	16.2
Transferred to other training (vocational courses, high school, Job Corps)	120	5.3
Dropped out of training	895	39.9
Project funding discontinued	110	4.9
Left training for unknown reasons	269	12.0
Still in training at August 1970	<u>185</u>	<u>8.3</u>
	<u>2,244</u>	<u>100.0</u>

The following table summarizes the information obtained from the Center's records concerning the reasons that 514 of the 895 persons either voluntarily or involuntarily dropped out of training. The records did not contain any information as to why the other 381 persons dropped out.

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Number</u>
Illness	137
Poor attendance	122
Moved from area	75
Care for families	52
Other (inability to adjust, pregnancy, lack of interest, etc.)	<u>128</u>
Total	<u>514</u>

Occupational training

The Center offered training in 25 different occupations from September 1964 through August 1970, and 11 of these occupational courses--those for clerical-type workers, welder, production-machine operator, auto mechanic, and auto-body repairman--accounted for 1,633, 62 percent, of the 2,652 enrollment positions available. The other 1,019 enrollment positions included training for custodial jobs, telegraphic-typewriter operators, electrical appliance servicemen, and grocery checkers.

From September 1964 through November 1968, the Center operated the occupational training courses on a project basis. A prescribed training curriculum was developed for each course, and trainees were presented with increasingly difficult subject matter as the course proceeded. A specific number of training positions were established for each course. This system resulted in a progressively declining utilization of facilities and training staff as a course proceeded, because of trainee dropouts. New trainees generally could not benefit from enrolling in vacancies in on-going courses created by dropouts because of their lack of knowledge of the training previously provided in the courses.

In December 1968 the Center adopted an open-entry and open-exit concept for operating the clerical training

courses. The system, which had been used for the prevocational training courses since September 1964, permitted continuous enrollee entry in and exit from the courses, enabling trainees to enter the courses at various intervals throughout the year and to leave after achieving the level of training consistent with their occupational goals.

The Center grouped or clustered related training courses in a skill-ladder progression which allowed a trainee to progress as far as his ability could carry him. The clerical cluster consisted of training courses in occupational specialties, ranging from a low-skilled occupation, such as a clerk, to a progressively higher skilled occupation, such as clerk typist, stenographer, or medical secretary.

An individual trainee could enter the clerical occupational cluster in the clerk-typist course and, if she showed high aptitude, subsequently take the stenographer or medical-secretary course; otherwise, she could enroll in a course requiring less aptitude.

Starting in September 1969 all occupational training courses, except the television service and repair course, were conducted under the open-entry and open-exit concept and the occupational cluster concept.

Trainee records maintained by the administrators of the Center and the Boston Public Schools showed that 3,047 persons, including 364 transferring from prevocational courses, had enrolled in occupational training courses during the 6-year period. Their status as of August 1970 follows.

<u>Status</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Completed training and/or left training to accept employment	1,912	62.8
Dropped out	875	28.7
Transferred to other training	14	.4
Still in training at August 1970	<u>246</u>	<u>8.1</u>
	<u>3,047</u>	<u>100.0</u>

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Employment security office records showing the employment status at the time of leaving the Center were not available for 904 of the 1,912 trainees who completed training and/or left training to accept employment. Of the other 1,008 trainees, 820, 81 percent, reported that they were leaving to take jobs, 43, 4 percent, did not have jobs, and 145, 15 percent, did not indicate their employment status.

A summary of the information obtained from the Center's records concerning the reasons that 474 of the 875 persons either voluntarily or involuntarily dropped out of training is shown below. The records did not contain any information as to why the other 401 persons dropped out.

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Number</u>
Illness	216
Poor attendance	60
Care for families	50
Other (inability to adjust, lack of interest, moved from area, etc.)	<u>148</u>
Total	<u>474</u>

COST OF TRAINING OPERATIONS

Costs incurred in operating the Center from September 1964 through August 1970 totaled \$2,906,000, consisting largely of instructors' salaries--about 87 percent--and the remainder for utilities, purchase and maintenance of equipment, building rental, and custodial services. Allowances paid to trainees were \$4,673,000.

Our analysis of the training costs, totaling \$1.29 million, for a selected 1-year period (July 1968 through June 1969) showed that the costs averaged about \$370 a man-month and about \$4,400 a man-year. We estimated, on the basis of Center records, that the following average costs were incurred in various courses during this period.

<u>Course</u>	<u>Average length in weeks</u>	<u>Average cost</u>
Prevocational training:		
Basic education	27	\$2,500
Communication skills	16	1,649
Occupational training:		
Auto-body repairman	29	2,610
Auto mechanic	29	2,322
Clerical worker	21	1,610
Combination welder	15	1,174
Detail draftsman	26	2,679
Production-machine operator	29	2,467
Television service and repairman	<u>48</u>	<u>3,326</u>
Average length and cost, all courses	27	\$2,260

NEED FOR AN IMPROVED MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

The managers of the Division of Employment Security and the Center needed to improve the Center's management information system to enable local, State, and Federal agencies responsible for the training program to better assess program results and to identify areas where changes in training emphasis or approach might be needed. Although the Division and the managers of the Center had compiled various program

data, they had not summarized and analyzed the data to assess the overall results and effectiveness of the Center's program.

The MDTA handbook, which contains the Department of Labor's regulations, policies, and procedures for operation of the MDTA institutional training program, requires local employment security agencies to obtain information that can be used for management purposes and to prepare certain reports on program activities, as follows:

- The Division of Employment Security is to send follow-up questionnaires at 3- and 6-month intervals to trainees who have successfully completed the training program, requesting information on their job status and postenrollment earnings.
- The Center is to prepare monthly progress reports for each training course, showing the number of trainees enrolled, transferred, terminated, completed, or dropped out.
- The Center is to compile data on the cost of instruction for individual training courses and on the cost of trainees allowances.

Although some of the prescribed information had been developed, we found that the requirements of the MDTA handbook were not being fully met.

We reviewed questionnaires sent to the 238 persons who had completed occupational training between September 1968 and August 1969 and noted that, at the 3-month follow-up interval, only 126 of the trainees had replied and, at the 6-month interval, only 119 had replied. Employment security office personnel told us that generally no follow-up other than the mailing of the 3- and 6-month questionnaires was undertaken.

The three local employment security offices responsible for obtaining follow-up information prepared statistics for each individual training course on the basis of responses from former trainees. The State employment security office in Boston, however, did not analyze these statistics to assess the overall results of the Center's training courses.

The Division of Employment Security did not obtain information on the status of trainees who terminated from prevocational training courses. The Boston MDTA Area Coordinator told us that most prevocational trainees were expected to transfer to occupational training at the Center and that follow-up information was to be obtained after the trainees completed that training. We found, however, that of the 1,643 trainees enrolled in prevocational training from August 1965 through August 1970, only 364 trainees had transferred to occupational training at the Center.

Local employment security offices did not analyze the Center's monthly progress reports, to assess the results of the Center's overall training program, or compare preenrollment and postenrollment earnings of terminated trainees to measure the training courses' effect on the individual's subsequent employment status.

Local offices did not develop an average cost for each trainee by comparing cost information with enrollment and termination data maintained by the Center. Such cost data would have provided program managers with a basis for comparing the costs of the various courses at the Center.

The shortcomings which we noted in the Center's management information system and follow-up efforts were similar to those noted by the Olympus Research Corporation, a management consultant firm under contract with HEW, in its evaluations of 19 other Federal-funded skills centers.¹ The firm's report stated that, although most centers generated a great deal of data concerning the enrollee and his performance while in training, only a few centers analyzed and used the data for management purposes. The report stated also that only four centers obtained follow-up information (three centers performed their own follow-up studies), only two knew their placement rates, and no center had information on the cost of training an enrollee and placing him in a job.

The Assistant Director, Employment and Operations Service, Division of Employment Security, agreed that local

¹"Evaluation of Manpower Development and Training Skills Centers," February 1971, Olympus Research Corporation, Salt Lake City, Utah.

offices had been deficient in obtaining follow-up information on jobs and earnings for persons who had completed training, especially prevocational trainees. He explained that the local offices never had sufficient personnel to obtain effective follow-up data. He also said that the employment aides who had been hired and the improved liaison with other agencies in the community should enable local employment security offices to do a better job of obtaining such information.

Conclusions

The Division of Employment Security and the Center need to develop an improved management information system to provide local, State, and Federal managers with the continuous flow of data needed to assess the results of Center operations and to make changes as necessary. Therefore we propose that Labor and HEW provide necessary guidance to the State Division of Employment Security and to the Center in developing an improved management information system.

In its letter of December 16, 1971, commenting on this report, the Department of Labor referred to the new "Guidelines for the Planning and Development of Skills Centers" developed and transmitted to the field late in 1970 and stated that the State Division of Employment Security had, after the conclusion of our review, implemented on a trial basis a revised management information system to provide improved data on program performance and Center operations.

By letter dated January 4, 1972, HEW stated that it concurred with our proposal and that its Office of Education was assisting the Center, through the State division, to improve the management information system.

Recommendation to the Secretaries of Labor and of Health, Education, and Welfare

Labor and HEW should review the adequacy of data provided through the revised information system which is being implemented at the Center on a trial basis and should provide such assistance as may be needed to further enhance reporting on the Center's operations.

CHAPTER 3

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED TO ENHANCE

EFFECTIVENESS OF CENTER'S PROGRAM

Our review revealed that problems in several areas needed to be corrected to enhance the effectiveness of training operations at the Center.

The Center's prevocational training did not always qualify persons for enrollment in the Center's occupational training courses, and the Center did not set aside a sufficient number of occupational training opportunities to accommodate all persons who were qualified.

The local employment security offices were not adequately screening training applicants for their eligibility as disadvantaged persons. Also, the Center and the State Division of Employment Security were not providing trainees with needed counseling services to improve their attitudes and motivation.

Labor and HEW and their State counterparts were not adequately monitoring the activities of the Center.

In view of the continuing existence of these problems and of other deficiencies in the Center's operations, regional officials of Labor and HEW in January 1972 considered terminating Federal funding of the Center. Headquarters officials of the two Departments, although agreeing that there were many deficiencies in the Center's operations, decided to continue the funding. Both the Departments have informed us of various steps which were being taken to improve the administration and operation of the Center.

These matters are discussed further in the following sections of this chapter.

NEED FOR BETTER COORDINATION AND CORRELATION OF TRAINING EFFORTS

The Center's management needs to better coordinate and correlate training efforts at the Center to ensure that

persons accepted for prevocational training will be able, within a reasonable period, to progress to occupational training at the Center if they need such further training to become employable. Two particular problems were evident at the time of our review:

- Prevocational training offered at the Center did not always qualify persons for enrollment in the Center's occupational training courses because of the persons' low educational levels when they entered the Center.
- The Center did not set aside sufficient occupational training opportunities to accommodate persons completing prevocational training, although they were qualified for and in need of occupational training.

To overcome these problems and to enhance the effectiveness of the Center's training, we proposed that Labor and HEW revise the allocation of funds between the prevocational and occupational training components and restructure the prevocational training component. After our discussion of the need for these changes with Labor and HEW officials, various steps were taken toward correcting the problems at the Center.

The MDTA handbook provides that selection for and referral to training in basic education, communication skills, and employment orientation should be limited to persons who cannot otherwise qualify for appropriate occupational training or employment. The handbook states that persons requiring basic education training must be able to achieve a level of education that will permit either their participation in occupational training or their employment.

Educational prerequisites in both English (reading) and mathematics established by the Center for the 322 training opportunities available from September 1968 to August 1969 were

- 200 opportunities for clerical, drafting, and television service and repair training required a 10th-grade educational level,

--16 opportunities for auto mechanic training required a seventh-grade educational level, and

--106 opportunities for auto-body repair, welding, and production machine operating required a fifth-grade educational level.

To assess the adequacy of the Center's prevocational training in preparing persons for occupational training courses, we reviewed preenrollment and postenrollment test scores in English and mathematics for a selected sample of trainees. Of the 326 persons who were tested before enrollment in prevocational training during the 12-month period September 1968 through August 1969, 173, or 53 percent, had less than a fourth-grade achievement level in either English or mathematics, or both. Tests of 103 of the 173 persons who left the Center after receiving an average 6.5 months of prevocational training showed that only 18, 17 percent, had improved their achievement levels in English and mathematics sufficiently to enable them to meet the minimum fifth-grade requirement for enrollment in occupational training. Only six of these 18 chose subsequently to enroll in occupational training at the Center. Another 12 of the 103 persons were accepted for occupational training under a waiver of the educational achievement requirements.

To ascertain whether persons entering prevocational training at the Center were being afforded an opportunity to obtain occupational training needed to become employable, we analyzed the enrollment statistics for occupational training courses given during the period September 1968 through August 1970. We also reviewed the policies, procedures, and practices of the Center and of the State employment security office concerning the enrollment of persons in occupational training courses at the Center.

We found that, of the 1,137 trainees enrolled in occupational training courses during the selected period, only 155, about 14 percent, had transferred from prevocational training, as shown in the following table.

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<u>Course</u>	<u>Total number enrolled</u>	<u>Number transferred from pre- vocational training</u>	<u>Percent of enroll- ment</u>
Clerical worker	766	106	13.8
Auto mechanic	52	13	25.0
Auto-body repairman	52	6	11.5
Welder	99	10	10.1
Production-machine oper- ator	65	10	15.4
Metal machinery worker	39	4	10.3
Draftsman	20	-	-
Television service and repairman	<u>44</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>13.6</u>
	<u>1,137</u>	<u>155</u>	<u>13.6</u>

Several factors appeared to contribute to the relatively small number of persons transferring from prevocational training to occupational training at the Center.

1. The local employment security offices had referred persons to prevocational training courses at the Center without considering whether occupational training would be available there when they completed prevocational training. Although most of the trainees who enrolled in prevocational courses also needed occupational training, the Center did not reserve occupational training positions for trainees enrolled in prevocational courses to ensure that they could obtain the needed occupational training. Most occupational training positions were filled with persons referred directly by the local employment security offices.

2. The Center enrolled a disproportionate number of males in prevocational training courses in relation to the relatively strong female-oriented occupational training offered. From July 1967 through August 1970, 655, 59 percent, of the 1,119 trainees in prevocational training courses were males. During the same period, however, only 358 of the 958 occupational training positions were male-oriented: auto mechanic, auto-body repairman, welder, production-machine operator, metal machinery worker, draftsman, and television

service and repairman. The other 698 training positions were for clerical workers, traditionally filled by females. Male trainees who had achieved the level of education needed to qualify them for occupational training were not always able to obtain it. As a result these trainees either remained in prevocational training until an occupational training position became available or dropped out of the Center.

Center officials told us that it was difficult to transfer persons from prevocational to occupational training courses because the Division of Employment Security was following the practice of filling most of the available slots by referring persons to the Center exclusively for occupational training. This practice limited the number of slots available in which to transfer persons from prevocational training courses.

The assistant director of the Division of Employment Security stated that, with regard to the balance between prevocational and occupational training slots, the relatively strong female orientation of occupational training versus a predominately male prevocational enrollment and the limited choice of occupational training, it was evident that corrective action was needed and should be taken.

Actions taken by Federal and State agencies

In December 1970 we discussed with officials at the headquarters of Labor and of HEW the inability of prevocational trainees to be enrolled in occupational training and the need for certain changes to better balance the two segments of the Center's training program. We proposed the following alternatives.

- Increase the number and type of occupational training courses to accommodate all eligible persons enrolled in prevocational training and needing skill training. Such courses should be based on the needs of the labor market in the Boston area, provide training for competitive and permanent employment, and avoid training for dead-end jobs without advancement potential.

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--Limit enrollment in prevocational training to persons that can be expected to qualify for enrollment in the occupational courses at the Center if additional courses cannot be justified or funded.

--Eliminate the prevocational training component as a separate entity and revise the occupational training curricula to include related basic education instruction considered necessary for the enrollees.

In February 1971 Labor and HEW headquarters and regional officials discussed our proposals with State Division of Employment Security and Department of Education officials and Center officials. These discussions led to the following agreement for changes to be made in the Center's training program.

The State Division of Employment Security would decide on the type and number of persons to be referred to the Center and would attempt to set up additional occupational training courses for males. The State Department of Education would (1) direct the prevocational training program toward the occupational offerings and consider scheduling basic education and occupational training concurrently, (2) restructure the prevocational training for occupational exploration and assessment as a basis for developing employability plans, and (3) attempt to locate in the Boston area a new facility large enough to house all the Center's clusters.

Commenting on the need for better coordination and correlation of training efforts, the Department of Labor pointed out that its 1970 guidelines required an annual evaluation of skills centers by regional office representatives of Labor and HEW. As a result of its first annual evaluation of the Boston Skills Center during the summer of 1971, Labor questioned the Center's adherence to performance standards, particularly because of the large number of prevocational assignments in relation to the more limited occupational training opportunities. Labor expected, however, that the State Division of Employment Security would be able to correct this imbalance.

Commenting on this matter, HEW stated that it concurred in our proposals for better coordination and correlation of prevocational and occupational training and that its Office of Education would monitor the progress made by the State agency and the Center in correcting this situation. HEW also told us that its regional offices would review the question in other skills centers and assist those centers experiencing similar problems to coordinate training programs.

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GREATER EMPHASIS SHOULD BE GIVEN
TO TRAINING THE DISADVANTAGED

To conform with the stated Department of Labor goal that at least 65 percent of the MDTA enrollees in each State be from among disadvantaged persons, greater emphasis should have been placed on serving the disadvantaged at the Boston Skills Center which provides training to the majority of the enrollees in Massachusetts. Our tests of enrollment records showed that only about 37 percent of the enrollees at the Center were disadvantaged persons and that 40 percent clearly were not. The records did not contain sufficient information to determine whether the remaining 23 percent were disadvantaged persons.

The Department of Labor established national training program goals for each of the fiscal years 1967 through 1970, which stated that at least 65 percent of the overall average enrollment in MDTA training programs in each State, including skills centers, be directed to the occupational training of the disadvantaged. Labor defines a disadvantaged person as one who is poor, in accordance with criteria established by the Social Security Administration; who does not have suitable employment; and who is either (1) a school dropout, (2) a member of a minority group, (3) under 22 years of age, (4) 45 years of age or over, or (5) handicapped.

The State of Massachusetts' Division of Employment Security estimated in March 1970 that, during fiscal year 1971, 117,400 persons in the Boston area would be living at or below the poverty level and that 76,600 of these persons would meet the Federal Government's criteria for classification as disadvantaged persons.

Our examination into the practices followed by the local employment security offices in screening and referring persons to the Center and our tests of selected enrollee records for the period December 1968 through June 1970 showed that numerous persons had been incorrectly classified as disadvantaged. This was mainly because total family income (as distinguished from individual income) was not always considered in determining the economic status of persons referred for training. Also in many instances there was insufficient information on file to ascertain whether the persons trained at the Center were disadvantaged.

The Boston MDTA program area coordinator for the Division of Employment Security told us that the local offices should have followed the prescribed criteria for identifying disadvantaged persons. The employment services officer for the Regional Manpower Administrator told us that only persons meeting the criteria should be classified as disadvantaged and that the Center should attempt to fill at least 65 percent of its training positions with disadvantaged persons.

Conclusion

The Department of Labor needs to emphasize its training objectives to the State Division of Employment Security and to have the State Division follow up with its local employment security offices to ensure that applicants for training are screened and referred for training in accordance with stated Department instructions and policies.

Also, because of the significant number of disadvantaged persons in the Boston area and because of the Department's stated objective of serving such persons, we believe that it is important for the Center to place greater emphasis on reaching and training disadvantaged persons.

Recommendation to the Secretary of Labor

We recommend that the Department of Labor require the State Division of Employment Security to (1) ensure that determinations of applicants' disadvantaged status be made by local employment security offices in accordance with prescribed criteria, and (2) give greater emphasis to recruiting and referring disadvantaged persons for training.

- - - -

Commenting on the need to emphasize the training of disadvantaged persons, the Department of Labor stated that the State Division of Employment Security acknowledged inadequate identification of such persons in its referrals to the Center and that the division would adopt procedures to overcome this problem.

NEED TO IMPROVE COUNSELING SERVICES

In many instances the Center and the State Division of Employment Security had not adequately counseled trainees, either before they started training or during their training. Also in many instances where counseling was provided, these offices did not document the specific results of such counseling.

The MDTA handbook provides that persons considered for training in basic education, communication skills, and employment orientation be provided counseling and appraisal services before referral to training. Information obtained during the counseling and appraisal of applicants, including the results of tests for measuring general learning ability and the applicants' present functioning levels, are intended to assist counselors in determining whether prevocational training is needed.

The handbook provides also that, when prevocational training precedes occupational training, the trainee's occupational objective does not have to be determined before prevocational training begins. The handbook states, however, that, as the prevocational training progresses, the Center should determine through counseling and appraisal the trainee's potential for employment in broad occupational fields, should determine a specific occupational goal, and then should direct the basic education instruction toward achieving the educational level needed by the trainee to qualify for occupational training.

Labor and HEW guidelines for the planning and development of skills centers state that the educational program should include both individual and group counseling concerned with testing and assessment, determining motivations and attitudes, evaluating progress, establishing occupational goals, and solving personal and socio-economic problems. The guidelines call for planned coordination between the staffs of skills centers and employment security agencies and a full exchange of testing and counseling results between the staffs.

We reviewed the case histories of 72 of the 128 trainees who were enrolled in basic education courses at various

times between August 1968 and August 1969. Through June 1970, the 72 trainees had spent from 5 to 23 months, an average 15 months, in basic education. For the 72 trainees, the records showed that:

- Preenrollment counseling records were on file for only three trainees. These records did not indicate the trainees' potentials for undergoing subsequent occupational training.
- Test scores were on file for only 24 trainees.
- Occupational training goals were not established for 34 trainees.
- Progress evaluations were not made regularly for 65 trainees.

The counseling staff at the Center consisted of two guidance counselors who were employees of the Boston Public Schools and two employment counselors who were employees of a local employment security office. Prior to December 1968 the employment counselors were assigned part time at the Center.

The counselors said that they had no regular scheduled trainee counseling sessions but interviewed each assigned trainee within a short time after he entered the Center. No other counseling session was scheduled, but counseling could result from the trainee's request, from the request of the trainee's instructor, or through a chance meeting of the trainee and the counselor. Except for the initial interview, counseling sessions were not generally documented.

We also questioned 75 former trainees and 60 active trainees concerning the counseling services provided to them. Of the 75 former trainees questioned, 21 said that, although attending the Center for periods ranging from 1 week to 24 months, they had never received individual counseling. Of the 60 active trainees questioned, 14 said that they had not received individual counseling.

Division of Employment Security officials told us that the records for some trainees may have been destroyed and for others may not have been prepared.

The assistant director, MDTA program, of the Boston Public Schools, indicated that he was concerned with the need to provide all trainees with regular and documented counseling sessions. He told us that counseling sessions were not documented in all cases because counselors did not always have the time. He stated that after our review the Center developed and implemented the employability team concept. Under this concept vocational education and employment security personnel cooperate in developing an employability plan for each trainee. This procedure was set up in accordance with the "Guidelines for the Planning and Development of Skills Centers," issued jointly by Labor and HEW in 1970.

The Assistant Director said that a plan included testing, evaluation and assessment, identification of personal and economic problems, and immediate and long-range career planning. He stated that implementation of the plan, initiation of group counseling, and weekly staff meetings would ensure more consistent and regular counseling efforts and comprehensive documenting of counseling contracts. He said also that group counseling had become an integral component of the program.

Conclusions

Counseling services provided to trainees at the Center were limited and records frequently were not maintained on the counseling given. Proper adherence to existing instructions should enable all trainees to receive counseling services in a planned and systematic manner and help to identify their individual problems and enhance their potential for obtaining and retaining employment. Counseling contacts should be adequately documented to enhance the counselors ability to recall pertinent information on trainees' problems and progress, to facilitate follow-up counseling, to enable the Center to better evaluate its counseling activities, and to enable continuity of counseling in the cases of counselor turnover.

Recommendation to the Secretaries
of Labor and of Health, Education
and Welfare

We recommend that Labor and HEW emphasize to the State Division of Employment Security and to the Center the need for adequate counseling services and monitor closely the implementation of the revised counseling services which the Center has initiated since our review.

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In its letter commenting on this report, the Department of Labor stated that the State Division of Employment Security planned to implement the employability team concept to help ensure adequate counseling at the Center. Also HEW agreed with our recommendation and cited actions being taken to improve counseling services.

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IMPROVEMENT NEEDED IN PROGRAM MONITORING
AND EVALUATING BY FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES

Labor, HEW, the State Division of Employment Security, and the State Department of Education were not adequately monitoring the Center's operations. We believe that the problems discussed in this report could have been identified for corrective action through more appropriate and timely monitoring.

Responsibility for the monitoring and evaluating various Center and related employment security activities is divided between Labor and HEW and their State counterparts. The Department of Labor and the State Division of Employment Security are responsible for monitoring the selection and the preenrollment counseling of trainees and the job-development and job-placement services provided for the trainees. HEW and the State Department of Education are responsible for monitoring the Center's administration, instruction of trainees, and services provided to trainees while they are enrolled.

Both Federal agencies have issued guidelines requiring monitoring of skills centers' operations and employment service activities. A memorandum issued by the Department of Labor in June 1966 states that a Federal-State team, composed of regional representatives of Labor and HEW and their State counterparts, should review each training project with an enrollment of 200 or more trainees within 60 days after the start of the project and every 4 months thereafter.

HEW regulations issued in January 1969 established a requirement that the training facility prepare a written self-evaluation of each instructional program within 30 days after program completion and include an assessment of local administration, instruction, supervision, trainee achievement and placement, and recommendations for improving the instructional program.

Skills center guidelines issued in June 1970 require that a regional Labor and HEW team, working with their State counterparts, periodically

- evaluate the operation of each skills center for which it is responsible,
- assess conformity of the operations with the skills center criteria and performance standards, and
- summarize the team's recommendations and submit them to the appropriate Cooperative Area Manpower Planning System committee and the MDTA Skills Center advisory committee.

A Department of Labor directive to State employment security agencies provides guidelines to the States for evaluation of MDTA training programs, to be made at least once each fiscal year. The directive provides that special attention be given to such areas as (1) adherence to standards and procedures for recruitment, selection, and referral of trainees, (2) adequacy of counseling services, (3) trends in numbers of terminations from training courses and extent of efforts to help trainees make a good adjustment to training, and (4) accuracy and adequacy of reporting.

Our discussions with responsible Federal, State, and Center officials showed that monitoring and evaluating at the Center was limited and did not conform to the intent of the various guidelines.

In October 1966 regional representatives of Labor and HEW, but not of the State agencies, conducted an evaluation of the Center's training program as required by Labor's June 1966 memorandum. Regional representatives of Labor and HEW, however, could not locate a copy of the evaluation report.

Department of Labor regional officials told us that they had not participated in evaluating the Center's operations since October 1966, because its staff was inadequate and because the Department of Labor had not delegated the evaluation responsibility until the reorganization of the Manpower Administration in 1969. The officials told us also that monitoring activities had been limited to reviewing and approving training proposals.

HEW regional program officers told us that the Division of Occupational Education of the State Department of Education had primary responsibility for monitoring and evaluating MDTA training projects and that regional HEW monitoring activities were limited principally to reviewing and approving training proposals. They also said that until June 1970 guidelines had not been provided delineating the monitoring and evaluating responsibilities of the Division of Occupational Education or of the HEW regional staff.

Since the Center's inception in September 1964, the Division of Employment Security has evaluated the activities of its local employment security offices on the basis of the adequacy of the services provided to all applicants and trainees, whether they were referred to the Center, to other MDTA courses, or to other manpower training programs. The division, however, had not made any in-depth evaluations of the Center's training program. As of August 1970 the division had issued 14 reports on evaluations of the operations of local offices. Of the 14 reports only two referred to the Center's activities and recommended staffing changes.

Reports by the Division of Occupational Education on MDTA training conducted in Massachusetts for fiscal years 1969 and 1970 contained sections pertaining to Center operations. The fiscal year 1969 report included a sampling of responses to questionnaires completed by trainees, instructors, and administrative personnel at the Center. The responses generally indicated that program operations were satisfactory. A Division of Occupational Education official stated that the annual review should have been more comprehensive but that personnel shortages prevented this. The fiscal year 1970 report stated that program objectives at the Center have generally been achieved. The report also indicated that the division needed additional personnel to carry out its monitoring activities.

The division's staff also visited the Center to evaluate on going projects and to discuss program operations with Center officials. The staff reviewed facilities, instruction, and Center administration and supervision. From September 1964 through September 1970, the staff prepared 23 reports on their visits. The reports contained the evaluators' comments and recommendations dealing with such

areas as the physical condition of facilities, attendance and tardiness of trainees and staff, need for approved instructors, use of audiovisual aids, lack of instructional supplies and equipment, and need for improved evaluation procedures.

The Center's supervisor said that HEW requirements for self-evaluation became effective with the start of program year 1970. The Center submitted an evaluation report to the Division of Occupational Education on July 27, 1970. The report indicated that the Center had an able administration and trained guidance personnel and teachers and that program objectives had been achieved. The report did not contain any recommendations for improving program operations.

Conclusions

Effective and continuous monitoring of Center operations and related employment security agency activities by Federal and State representatives is essential to detect and correct program weaknesses, strengthen program administration, and better ensure achievement of program objectives.

Monitoring and evaluating of the Center's activities by Labor and HEW were limited primarily to reviewing training proposals, with little effort directed toward reviewing the Center's training program. State agencies' monitoring and evaluating of Center operations and related activities similarly were not directed to an in-depth assessment of program results. Consequently weaknesses in program administration--coordination of prevocational and occupational training, selection of individuals for training, and counseling--were not detected for corrective action.

We proposed that Labor and HEW

- emphasize to their regional offices and the cognizant State agencies the importance of implementing the evaluation procedures contained in the skills center guidelines and
- review periodically the results of the regional offices' and State agencies' monitoring and evaluating activities to ascertain whether these activities

were being carried out in accordance with the guidelines.

- - - -

Commenting on the need for improved monitoring of the Center's activities, the Department of Labor referred to the 1970 guidelines which became effective subsequent to our review at the Center and which required an annual evaluation by regional representatives of Labor and HEW with subsequent review by Labor's headquarters office.

The new guidelines, if properly implemented, should provide the needed in-depth assessments of the Center's operations.

HEW stated that it concurred in our proposal and had requested the State agency to submit specific data in accordance with requirements for evaluating the Center's activities. HEW stated also that its regional office would evaluate the adequacy of the State agency's evaluation.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
 OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20210



DEC 16 1971

Mr. Henry Eschwege
 Associate Director
 Civil Division
 United States General
 Accounting Office
 Washington, DC 20548

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Dear Mr. Eschwege:

We have reviewed the General Accounting Office draft report entitled "Opportunities for Improving Training Operations at the Boston Skills Center Under the Manpower Development and Training Act." The following comments are relative to that report.

Recommendations and Comments

1. We recommend that the Department of Labor and HEW provide necessary guidance to the State Division of Employment Security and the Skills Center in developing an improved management information system, which will enable local, State, and Federal agencies to carry out their responsibilities for planning, operating, evaluating, and improving Skills Centers operations.

Guidelines for the Planning and Development of Skills Centers have been developed and were transmitted to the field by November 1970. The GAO audit of the Boston Skills Center was being concluded at this time. Also, the Massachusetts Division of Employment Security (MDES) has since developed a "Monthly Performance Standards" form which is now being used on a trial basis. The MDES has also revised their "Justification for Repeat Proposal" procedures to require the answering of pertinent operational questions before any MDTA project will be renewed.

2. To insure that Federal funds are used to provide training in the most effective manner, we recommend that the Department of Labor and HEW regional offices (a) monitor closely the implementation of the required changes in Skills Centers operations, and (b) determine whether other Skills Centers may be experiencing similar problems in coordinating prevocational and occupational training programs and where a need for change is indicated, assist the Skills Center in revising its program.

APPENDIX I

The Guidelines for the Planning and Development of Skills Centers which have been developed and transmitted to the field spell out the requirements for acceptable Skills Center operation. The guidelines require an annual evaluation of Skills Centers by DOL and DHEW regional office personnel with reports of these evaluations transmitted to the National Office. The first such evaluation (this summer) of the Boston Skills Center raised a question of its adherence to performance standards, particularly on the number of prevocational assignments in relation to vocational training opportunities. We believe the Massachusetts Division of Employment Security can and will correct this imbalance.

3. We recommend that the Department of Labor require the State Division of Employment Security to (a) ensure that determination of applicants disadvantaged status is made by local employment security offices in accordance with prescribed criteria, and (b) give greater emphasis to recruiting and referring disadvantaged persons to Skills Centers for training.

The MDES admitted inadequate identification of disadvantaged individuals in their referrals to the Boston Skills Center. Ascertaining the income level of enrollees was the problem. The MDES will employ in the future procedures which will more accurately determine the income levels of applicants. With current economic conditions, the MDES indicated there would be no problem in identifying adequate numbers of disadvantaged persons. It should be noted, however, that the 65 percent disadvantaged criteria applies to the overall average of each State's MDTA trainees in this category and not what is required for each individual MDTA training project or Skills Center.

4. We recommend that the Department of Labor and HEW emphasize to the State Division of Employment Security and the Skills Center the need for adequate counseling services and monitor closely the implementation of the revised counseling services which the Skills Center has initiated since our review.

The MDES plans to implement the employability team concept during this fiscal year. This will help insure that adequate counseling and job development will be provided to MDTA trainees. Prior to the issuance of the Guidelines for the Planning and Development of Skills Centers, the MDES did not fully understand its role in the monitoring of Skills Centers. With the issuance of the guidelines and the development of their "Monthly Performance Standards" procedures, the MDES now feels it has adequate monitoring tools.

5. We recommend that the Department of Labor and of Health, Education and Welfare (a) emphasize to their regional offices and the cognizant State agencies the importance of implementing the evaluation procedures

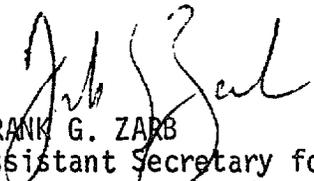
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contained in the Skills Centers guidelines, and (b) review periodically the results of the regional offices' and State agencies' monitoring and evaluation activities to ascertain whether these activities are being carried out in accordance with the guidelines.

The Guidelines for the Planning and Development of Skills Centers requires an annual evaluation of Skills Centers with subsequent review of these evaluations by the National Office. Unfortunately, these guidelines were not available prior to the GAO audit.

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report prior to issuance of the final report.

Sincerely,



FRANK G. ZARB
Assistant Secretary for
Administration and Management

APPENDIX II



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

JAN 4 1972

Mr. Henry Eschwege
Associate Director, Civil Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Eschwege:

The Secretary has asked that I reply to your letter dated September 13, with which you forwarded the draft report of the General Accounting Office entitled, "Opportunities for Improving Training Operations at the Boston Skills Center, Under the Manpower Development and Training Act." The Center is funded and administered by the Departments of Labor and Health, Education, and Welfare.

Detailed comments on the recommendations as they relate to this Department, together with the statement of actions to be taken by the State agency, are set forth in the enclosure. They are the product of a review of the report by the State agency and cognizant Departmental and Office of Education staff. A copy of the State agency's comments is enclosed.

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the report.

Sincerely yours,

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J B Cardwell".

James B. Cardwell
Assistant Secretary, Comptroller

Enclosures

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
COMMENTS PERTINENT TO THE DRAFT REPORT TO THE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES BY THE UNITED STATES
GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR
IMPROVING TRAINING OPERATIONS AT THE BOSTON SKILLS
CENTER

Necessary guidance should be provided to the State
Division of Employment Security and the Center in
developing an improved management information
system.

Department Comment

We concur in the recommendation.

The Office of Education is assisting the State agency which is currently taking corrective action with the training facility to improve its management information system. We believe their action is progressing in a very positive vein.

The required changes in center operations should be
closely monitored. If it should be determined that other
skills centers may be experiencing similar problems in
coordinating prevocational and occupational training
programs, the Center should be assisted in revising its
program.

Department Comment

We concur in the recommendation.

The required changes suggested by GAO deal with (i) increasing the type and number of occupational training courses to accommodate those needing them; if this is not possible, (ii) limiting enrollment in prevocational training to persons expected to qualify for enrollment in occupational courses, and (iii) eliminating prevocational training as a separate component and revising the occupational training curriculum. Several changes have already been instituted by the State agency to provide for closer monitoring activities at the Center, including the assignment of a full-time representative onsite at the Center. The Office of Education through its regional representatives will monitor the progress being made.

APPENDIX II

We would like to point out that we take exception to the concept held by the State (see their letter attached) that to limit enrollment in prevocational training to persons who can be expected to qualify for enrollment in the occupational courses at the Center is not serving the needs of the individual, but just filling the course.

In a monitoring visit earlier this year, we made specific recommendations concerning prevocational and basic education components in the skills center, e.g., that they (i) restructure the prevocational and basic education programs for the purpose of occupational exploration and assessment as a basis for developing individual and employability plans, and (ii) design the program for a minimum number of weeks and utilize it as a feeder into the skill training clusters or as a referral to other appropriate MDTA training.

We will follow-up to insure that corrective action along the aforementioned lines is taken in the upcoming program to be funded at the Boston Center.

Regional offices are reviewing the operations in other skills centers to determine whether they are experiencing prevocational and occupational training problems. Where these problems exist, they are assisting the centers in revising their programs.

The need for adequate counseling services should be emphasized to the State Division of Employment Security and the Center and the implementation of the revised counseling services which the Center has initiated since the GAO review should be closely monitored.

Department Comment

We concur in the recommendation.

The Office of Education has emphasized to the State agency the need for adequate counseling services. The State agency will supervise the Center's activities, including counseling activities; the Center will also provide monthly follow-up reports to the State and will schedule regular individual and group guidance procedures.

We believe that the actions taken will provide better counseling services.

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The importance of implementing the evaluation procedure contained in the skills center guidelines should be emphasized to the regional office and the State agency and the results of their monitoring and evaluating activities should be reviewed periodically to ascertain whether these activities are being carried out in accordance with the guidelines.

Department Comment

We concur in the recommendation.

We have requested the State agency to (i) prepare a statement indicating how the skills center meets the performance standards as contained in the center guidelines, and (ii) submit a joint evaluation of the Center's activities according to the standards and criteria contained in the guidelines.

The regional offices will comment on the evaluation based on their on-site monitoring and evaluation activities and take appropriate action as indicated by the circumstances.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS OF
THE DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR AND
OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE
INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM

Tenure of office

From To

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

SECRETARY OF LABOR:

James D. Hodgson	July 1970	Present
George P. Shultz	Jan. 1969	June 1970
W. Willard Wirtz	Sept. 1962	Jan. 1969

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR MANPOWER:

Malcolm R. Lovell, Jr.	July 1970	Present
Arnold R. Weber	Feb. 1969	July 1970
Stanley H. Ruttenberg	June 1966	Jan. 1969

MANPOWER ADMINISTRATOR:

Paul J. Fassler, Jr.	Oct. 1970	Present
Malcolm R. Lovell, Jr.	June 1969	Oct. 1970
J. Nicholas Peet	Feb. 1969	June 1969
William Kolberg (acting)	Jan. 1969	Feb. 1969
Stanley H. Ruttenberg	Jan. 1965	Jan. 1969

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION,
AND WELFARE:

Elliot L. Richardson	June 1970	Present
Robert H. Finch	Jan. 1969	June 1970
Wilbur J. Cohen	Mar. 1968	Jan. 1969
John W. Gardner	Aug. 1965	Mar. 1968

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